

Making the Case for an Automated HR Help Desk



EMPOWERING HR
AND ENGAGING EMPLOYEES
WITH AFFORDABLE, EASY-TO-USE
SELF-SERVICE TECHNOLOGIES

Overview

Can an automated HR help desk lower costs and increase efficiencies for corporate businesses, regardless of their size?

Can the combination of self-service technologies and Web access allow employees to answer their own questions and in turn free HR staff to attend to strategic business tasks?

In a nutshell, yes.

Products like LBi HR HelpDesk from LBi Software move popular self-service technologies out of the retail and banking worlds and into the world of human resources. Affordable pricing, ease of implementation and simplified maintenance put the automated HR help desk within reach of even small and midsize businesses.

An automated HR help desk leverages employee self-service (ESS) applications and merges them with the latest Web technologies to create open communication between the employee and the human resources department. The upshot: You run your business more efficiently.

The LBi HR HelpDesk, for example, is built on years of lessons learned from LBi's customer call-center experience. Applying that knowledge to employee needs, the LBi HR HelpDesk is uniquely designed to give employees the ability to address HR-related issues anytime they want, simply by going online. Gone are the days when employees had to visit the HR office, send an email, or make a phone call to ask HR a question or get a problem resolved.

By providing online access for employees to answer their own queries, today's most effective and efficient automated HR help desks take the efficiencies of "first-call resolution" to the next level.

The LBi HR HelpDesk, for example, funnels employee queries through a Web portal and gives the employee self-searching techniques and resources – FAQs, knowledge bases and online handbooks. This system facilitates the resolution of basic queries. If the problem is more complex or uncommon, the employee can always contact HR through the help desk, or by email or phone. But the goal of the LBi HR HelpDesk and similar solutions is to promote resolution through self-service and give HR staff members the time and resources to focus on strategic business activities. The results are improved staff efficiencies and increased job satisfaction.

Organizational Challenges in the Traditional Model

In a traditional HR department, the available staff manually handles employee queries and concerns. Employees, meanwhile, tend to seek information from people they know – which may or may not be someone in HR. The resulting answers may be inaccurate or inconsistent with current HR policies.

In this environment, we see:

- Manual paper-based processes
- Inconsistent application of policies
- Slow resolution times
- Poor security and oversight
- Ineffective use of HR resources
- Wasted employee time

In many cases, similar or duplicated queries are answered multiple times, increasing the time and resources needed for research and feedback.

With an automated HR help desk that is implemented with current Web technologies, such as LBi HR HelpDesk, HR can easily offer employee case management, call tracking, automatic case escalation and security for sensitive data.

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Business Requirements for an Effective Automated System

The key business drivers for an automated HR help desk are similar to those of a customer help desk, but with an inward focus. That is, they support the company's employees rather than its customers. Similarly, while cost savings and efficiencies are key considerations in driving help desk management and defining business requirements, more-specific Key Performance Indicators also play a role. These indicators focus on:

- Case management
- Call tracking
- Response time
- Accurate answers to queries
- Matching queries to the right specialist
- Eliminating or reducing escalation of basic questions
- Effectiveness of the FAQ and/or knowledge base
- Data security and compliance
- Data integrity and accuracy

Features and Benefits of an Automated HR Help Desk

At a minimum, an automated HR help desk solution must address the following seven core features:

1. Ease of use
2. Comprehensive case management (e.g., case tracking, automatic assignment and escalation)
3. Full reporting
4. Secure communications
5. Confidentiality
6. Email integration
7. IVR (interactive voice response) and speech integration

This section explains the benefits of each of these core features.

1. Ease of Use

The self-service portal provides convenient access to the help desk, allowing employees and HR as needed to enter new cases, access the knowledge base, update existing cases and documents, and review the status of open cases.

Because the system automatically accesses data already in the company's HR systems, the help desk's display fields can be easily populated, simplifying the entire interaction. The Web portal is the primary access point for both the employee and the HR staff, allowing for ease of use, secure communication and complete case management. However, several alternate interfaces can be integrated with the help desk.

2. Comprehensive Case Management

We can see how this critical area is addressed in detail by reviewing the features in the LBi HR HelpDesk. We'll start with management of the individual case:

Case Entry. Entry is simplified by populating fields with data automatically drawn from HR systems.

Case History. Summaries of prior transactions, including telephone calls, are available to help resolve current issues, review previous case histories and enter new case information.

Knowledge Base. A database of common questions and appropriate answers to research and resolve cases is available to HR staff and employees. HR staff can easily locate answers to common issues. The result is first-call resolution and reduced escalation and cost.

Automatic Escalation. Unresolved cases are automatically forwarded to topic specialists and included on aging reports. Management is notified if intervention is needed.

Automatic Assignment. Cases are distributed to customer service representatives (CSRs) based on allocation methods that match resources to topics, resources to employees, or other critical assignment criteria.

Resolution Logging. A complete audit trail of cases and resolutions is maintained. Reporting is available on relevant statistics, date and time of resolution, CSR/specialist involved, and days outstanding.

*Several alternate **interfaces** can be **integrated** with the help desk.*

3. Full Reporting

Ad-hoc and detailed reports help identify policies, procedures and guidelines that need to be clarified for employees. This in turn reduces call-center activity. For example:

Case Detail Reports. Show the specific details on each case.

Case Status Reports. Indicate the total number of open and closed cases by specified categories, such as average call resolution time.

Case Ownership Reports. List opened and closed cases by “owner” (e.g., responsible CSR or HR staff member) during a specific time period.

Management reporting that includes a dashboard is a useful feature for executives.

4. Secure Communications

Increasingly in HR we are seeing the need for compliance with privacy regulations and the importance of securing sensitive employee data. An automated HR help desk only needs to secure the data as it is communicated between the employee and the system. It also needs to ensure that the data is viewed only by the appropriate people. Inside an effective and quality-driven automated help desk, confidentiality can be maintained. HR policies will dictate which individuals have access to each specific case.

In the typical corporate environment, most self-service tools work well for an automated help desk; employees already have daily and private access to computers with Internet access. In blue-collar environments, however, or in environments with highly mobile workforces, a browser-based system may require other mean of access. In those cases, the LBi HR HelpDesk is able to integrate technologies such as Computer Telephony Integration (CTI) and Interactive Voice Response (IVR), along with the usual Web-based tools. Those tools – email integration and IVR and speech integration – are features six and seven.

5. Confidentiality

LBi HR HelpDesk secures confidential communication so that it’s never seen by unauthorized eyes. Personal issues, such as harassment and manager disputes, are automatically tagged as confidential; only HR personnel who are authorized to handle such cases can view them. These cases are not visible to others through searches or reports.

6. Email Integration

A comprehensive automated help desk will need to use the company email program to facilitate communication between employees and the HR department. The LBi HR HelpDesk uses the company email system to:

- Send event-triggered emails, including follow-up reminders
- Send a copy of emails to the managers and specialists involved in each case
- Update employees on their case status via email

7. IVR and Speech Integration

For employees without access to computers, telephone-based technologies can provide communication with the automated help desk. The LBi HR HelpDesk uses IVR and speech integration to:

- Integrate data in the system with data from IVR-based systems
- Draw on employee records that are stored in human capital management (HCM) systems to populate the screen of the LBi HR HelpDesk CSR with the employee’s data

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Recommendation

Studies show that the right self-service system with the right information can accurately address and resolve 80 percent of all employee inquiries. This kind of result has two concrete outcomes:

- It enables HR staff to apply themselves to more productive strategic tasks.
- It significantly reduces the costs associated with attending to employees' HR questions and concerns.

In fact, for businesses that are currently operating with a traditional HR department, the cost savings and the redirection of HR staff to strategic issues can justify serious consideration of an automated HR help desk solution.

With a traditional manual HR call center, it's true that you gain efficiencies in handling the incoming queries compared with a traditional HR staffing system. But you still face the challenges of providing accurate and consistent information, as well as the problem of managing the call center and staffing it with HR professionals. The bottom line is that many of the challenges inherent in a manual process tend to remain, while the biggest potential for reducing costs through an automated system are not leveraged. Upgrading your call center with an automated HR help desk will help you address these problems and lower operating costs.

If you have an HR call center, you can estimate the return on investment (ROI) by calculating your current cost per call and running a comparison of that figure against the purchase and operating costs of a solution like LBi HR HelpDesk.

ROI Calculation Details and Illustration

Cost per Call

Cost per call is calculated as the cost of a call arriving and being answered at your help desk. There are several ways to calculate this. Here, we focus on (1) the basic cost per call and (2) the fully loaded cost per call.

● **Basic Cost per Call**

Calculation: Calls per Hour ÷ Agent's Hourly Wage

Basic cost per call is useful when determining the extra cost associated with handling a nominal number of additional calls. For example, it helps you determine at what level of increased calls you will need additional agents, supervisors and stations.

Example

If your agent takes 15 calls per hour and is paid an hourly wage of \$15, the cost per call is \$1 (15 calls ÷ \$15 per hour). To handle an additional 100 calls within your contact center, you will have to pay \$100 more.

● **Fully Loaded Cost per Call**

Calculation: (Annual Operating Cost + Labor) ÷ Total Number of Calls per Year

Annual operating costs take into account facilities, supervisors, managers, benefits, incentives, maintenance, desktop computers, etc. The fully loaded cost per call is useful if you want to compare your efficiencies with those of a third-party contact center. For most contact centers, the metrics to arrive at the budgeted cost per call are based on a fully loaded cost.

Example

If your annual operating costs are \$100,000 per year, your labor costs are \$1,000,000 and you receive 400,000 calls per year, the fully loaded cost per call is \$2.75. The calculation is (\$100,000 + \$1,000,000)/400,000.

In organizations that have multiple CSRs and supervisors handling employee HR inquiries, the LBi HR HelpDesk has demonstrated a 100 percent ROI in less than three years. ROI is accelerated in organizations with more than 10,000 employees.

Summary

The extension of employee self-service with newer technologies has resulted in the automated HR help desk shifting the focus from purely information-based support applications toward systems that empower employees and managers to take more responsibility for their jobs and work environment. Improved technology, a better understanding of HR roles, more of a hands-off approach by HR departments and an increasingly Web-savvy workforce have all been drivers of this trend.

LBi HR HelpDesk leverages all of those components for a help desk solution that combines the convenience of the Web and the power of your HR system. It gives employees access to accurate, consistent answers and guidance from the company's information systems.

LBi HR HelpDesk gets your HR department out of perpetual help desk mode because it handles virtually all of the repetitive requests to HR. Your HR staff, meanwhile, focuses its attention on higher-value functions. With the precisely engineered LBi HR HelpDesk:

- Employees have direct access to searchable FAQs, knowledge bases, guides and handbooks; they can find answers themselves and significantly reduce calls, emails and visits to the HR department
- A single solution makes the process of administration more efficient, and in turn reduces administrative overhead
- HR staff can focus on addressing complex employee requests that require HR expertise

The results can be seen in improved service performance, expanded service offerings and significant cost efficiencies.

About LBi Software

LBi Software provides precisely engineered, customer-focused human resources technology solutions developed from more than 30 years of experience in HR technology and HR processes. Our flagship solution, LBi HR HelpDesk, is an innovative case manager and call-tracking workflow solution that creates a rich and powerful knowledge base on the fly. Our organic belief in – and solid reputation for applying – a true client-vendor partnership on every project ensures a highly configurable solution designed to put the power in the hands of the employee. In addition, every LBi project is supported by our rich experience and expertise in Mobile Development, Business Intelligence, Data Warehousing, and Reporting and Analytics.

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